FALL BOOK ISSUE

THE

Commonweal

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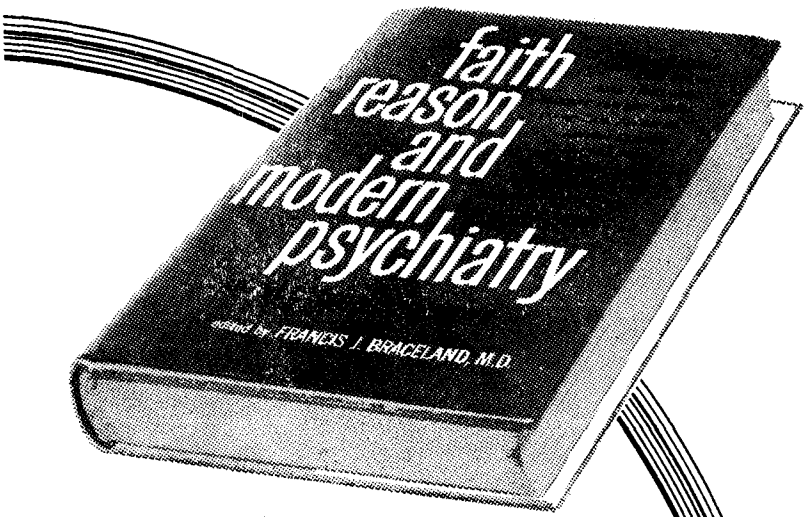

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The Commonweal

week by week

THE AUTHORITARIAN TEMPTATION

THERE is a sense—and a profound one—in which Catholic tradition is the ultimate guarantor of human freedom. Locked in the heart of this tradition, majestic and inviolable, is the Church's teaching on conscience. A man must follow the dictates of his conscience, whatever the cost, and no man's conscience may be forced by any power—either of this world or of the next.

With a daring that must puzzle those who fail to understand her depth, the Church has always maintained that a man must obey his conscience when he is subjectively certain that it is correct, even though, in any given situation, his conscience may be objectively in error.

Here is a guarantee of man's freedom that neither time nor power can corrode. Despite the failings and persecutions of history, despite the arrogance and pretensions of totalitarian regimes, despite, even, the intolerance and blindness of many Catholics, the freedom of the human spirit can find a sure refuge as long as the Church endures.

These are truths essential to the Catholic tradition. In view of them, there is paradox as well as sadness in the fact that many Catholics throughout modern history—sometimes an overwhelming majority of them—have shown a peculiar readiness to ally themselves with temporal orders opposed to political freedom, orders which are dedicated to the suppression of individual liberty and the imposition of conformity by force. There is paradox and sadness too in the fact that, because of this, many men of good will consider the Church an opponent of human freedom, a defender of authoritarian political orders, an enemy of the democratic State.

The public statements of some Catholics give unfortunate support to this view. The president of a leading Catholic university, for example, recently was widely quoted for saying that "obsessive liberalism" is the clear and present danger to the United States today, "more subtly pernicious even than the Communist conspiracy." And last June an American Bishop was widely quoted for saying that if the Bill of Rights means what the liberals say it means—if Communists can safely take refuge behind the Fifth Amendment—then the Bill of Rights should be discarded. (This Bishop too considered "liberals" a greater danger to the Republic than Communists.)

STATEMENTS such as these are not likely to convince men that the Church is an institution to be trusted in any free society. The impression they give, rather, is of a dangerous nostalgia for some pre-democratic, authoritarian political order—one which would be completely "safe" because all inconvenient guarantees of a man's legal right to be wrong would be abrogated.

It seems that, despite the Church's profound position on human freedom, Catholics in many instances suffer from an authoritarian temptation which leads them into political traps and historic blind alleys. It leads them, for example, into supporting dictators like Juan Perón and Francisco Franco as long as these dictators are "friends" of religion. The worst scoundrel, the most oppressive tyrant, can find his Catholic supporters if only he is willing to pay lip service to the Church.

The ideal of freedom in the political order is thus too often left to the "liberals" to fight for, while Catholic energies are spent in fighting rearguard actions in defense of lost causes. It took a courageous Pope—Leo XIII—to force French Catholics, for the sake of their own survival, into finally accepting the French Republic, and the Pope's action, when it came, was almost too late. By then the majority of French opinion was irreconcilably hostile to the Church.

Does this mean that the Church should or can adapt herself to every changing political order, that Catholics should or can support every aberration of the modern spirit and remain silent before perversions of right political order? It clearly does not. What it means is that if the attitude

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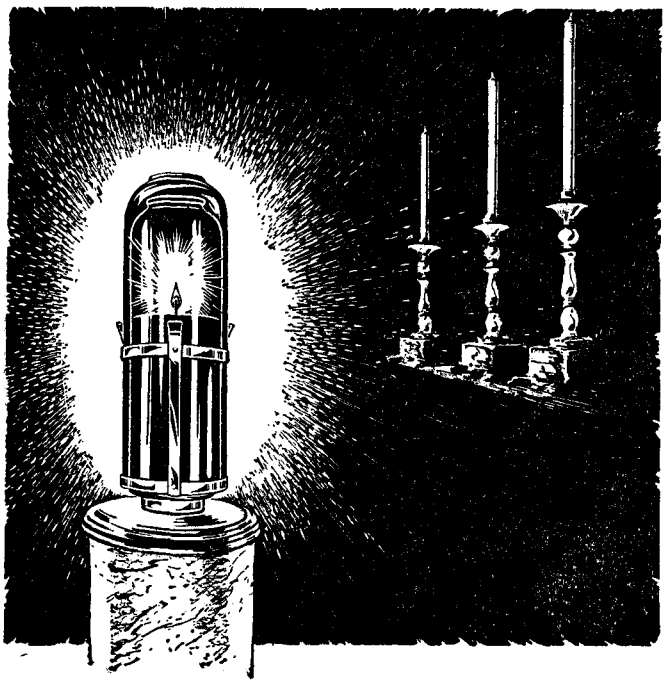
Like the Star Which Guided the Magi . . .



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THIS WEEK

Week by Week 75

The Political Novel Today
by Michael Harrington 79

Contrasts in Elegance
by Wallace Fowlie 82

Experiments in Learning
by Michael P. Fogarty 86

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 90

The Stage
by Richard Hayes 91

Books 95

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of Catholics toward the world remains as negative as it has often been in the past, then the world is indeed lost to the Church's enemies. It means also that faced with the challenge of materialistic concepts of human society the Christian today must be willing to search in his own tradition for positive answers to society's great needs.

Men today, perhaps more than at any time in the past, hunger for justice, for freedom. The future will belong to those who can satisfy this hunger. The future is revolutionary, dynamic, and the question is only whether it will take the form of a Christian-democratic revolution or a materialist-Marxist one. Marxists feel confident. The future belongs to them, they think, because the genius of the West is dead. They will be proved wrong only if Christians answer with their own dynamic.

That is why we have a sinking feeling every time we read of some new attack from some Catholic quarter on the errors of "liberals" or pseudo-liberals. It is not thus that the world will be saved. Whatever be the errors of the liberals—and they are many—liberals at least are fighting in many instances for things that Catholics must not lightly oppose. The fight for civil liberties, for example, is too important to be left to those who fail to understand why man is really free. The great task of Catholics in this century is to meet the age's demands with answers adequate to the age's needs. In order to do this, merely negative attacks on the age must be replaced by a wider vision and a deeper charity.

ARMS FOR EGYPT

THE Soviet Union could scarcely have stepped into a more explosive situation than that existing between Israel and the neighboring Arab States. The latter still smart under their defeat in battle of 1948; they do not accept that verdict as final. The 900,000 Arab refugees, settled in camps near the border and determined not to give up their former homes, serve as a constant incitement, while Arab and Israeli border skirmishes keep passions at a fever heat.

The Western powers have been sitting on the lid, trying to keep outbreaks within minor proportions, dispensing arms to both sides in such limited quantities that neither adversary would find itself in a position to undertake a war against the other. Up to now the Arab world has been proof against Soviet blandishments primarily because Moslem religious leaders have been vigorously anti-Soviet. The Arabs' willingness to listen now is said to be the result of a carefully-waged propaganda campaign to the effect that Moslems are now free to practice their religion in the Soviet Union and that this freedom has never been restricted in Communist China.

A more positive reason can be found in the desire of a number of the Arab States to assert their independence. Premier Nasser has greatly increased his personal prestige by concluding the agreement to exchange Egyptian cotton for Czech weapons; the other Arab States have warmly applauded. This has been followed up by Soviet offers of technical assistance, both industrial and agricultural, and of trade which is to be on a barter basis and hence attractive to Arab States with depleted treasuries.

At best this development can mark the beginning of an armaments race between Arabs and Israelis which such States can ill afford. Further impoverishment of already destitute populations would be inevitable. At worst it will bring on a resumption of full-scale hostilities—if the greatly outnumbered but hard-bitten survivors of Nazi concentration camps should decide to strike before the odds become too overwhelming, or if Egypt should carry out the fiery threats of its press and radio and of its political leaders.

For the Soviet leaders it appears to be but a short step from their post-Geneva gambols to a fishing expedition in waters as troubled as are these. But for the Allied powers counter action is much more difficult. Unless they act in concert and with determination at this juncture, the losses they—and the peoples of the Middle East—are to sustain will be incalculable.

A MAN AND HIS FRIENDS

IT is understandable enough that Vice President Nixon's friends would like to see him win the Republican nomination. What is odd is the way they go about it, antagonizing all over again the independent voters and Eisenhower Republicans without whose support Mr. Nixon cannot hope to win.

Opposition to the Nixon candidacy, his friends are saying darkly, comes from the Communists. And from this statement it is a short and easy step to the conclusion that those who do not want to see Mr. Nixon the Republican nominee are wittingly or unwittingly following the Communist line. Now it is a fact that the *Daily Worker* is strongly opposed to the idea of a Nixon candidacy, in large part, probably, because of the key role Mr. Nixon played in the exposure of Alger Hiss. But

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the conclusion Mr. Nixon's supporters draw from this fact is something else again.

Like many people who abhor everything the *Daily Worker* stands for, we ourselves have great difficulty waxing enthusiastic about the idea of Richard Nixon as President, and we feel this way despite his role in the Hiss case, not because of it. What bothers us is the fact that Mr. Nixon and his friends seem to have a positive genius for degrading the level of political discussion. And running for the Republican nomination against the *Daily Worker*, instead of against the other Republican candidates, is just one more example of what we find objectionable in the Nixon approach to politics.

Yet, for all the usual slickness of the Nixon technique, we do not believe that the line now being promoted by some of his supporters will help him. For to say that because a man is opposed by the *Daily Worker* he will therefore make a good President is too obviously nonsense. And Mr. Nixon's opposition certainly goes far beyond the Communists. Recently, for example, one speaker, in an obviously anti-Nixon statement, said he did not think any man should be designated as "heir-apparent" if President Eisenhower did not seek re-election, and then added that he did not consider a "Pepsodent smile, a ready quip, an actor's perfection with lines, nor an ability to avoid issues, as qualifications for high office." Although such sentiments must pain the Vice President's friends, the quote is not from an editor of the *Daily Worker*, but the GOP minority leader in the Senate, Senator Knowland of California. Will Mr. Nixon's more zealous friends now suggest that Mr. Knowland too is the dupe of the Communists?

NEXT WEEK

THOMAS E. KENNELLY writes on popular attitudes toward civil liberties in the United States today.

"Our ideology, if it can be so described, consists in our determination to maintain an atmosphere of toleration so that the question of truth shall remain open. . . . The present danger to civil liberties lies not so much in public apathy as in a fundamental blindness. There is something provincial in our pluralistic society which produces a tendency among us to identify liberty with 'liberties' which we approve, and 'license' with the activities of our non-conformist neighbors. . . . We do not see any connection between the need for tolerating ideas which we loathe and the free exercise of our own civil liberties."

THE LEGION AND UNESCO

AT its recent Miami convention, the American Legion passed without floor debate a formal resolution denouncing UNESCO. In doing so, it has again demonstrated that it can act with almost complete disregard for verifiable fact and responsible opinion, that Legionnaires are more than willing to march in where even fools would fear to tread.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is an autonomous agency whose program is designed primarily to promote better understanding through education. The United States is one of seventy-four countries participating in the program, principally through a National Commission which acts as a channel between the agency and various educational, scientific, and cultural groups within this country.

Representatives to this Commission have been nominated from organizations such as the American Federation of Labor, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the National Council of Churches of Christ, and the United States Chamber of Commerce. A committee of private citizens appointed by President Eisenhower found accusations against UNESCO to be completely unfounded. In addition, a special Legion committee headed by Mr. Ray Murphy, past national commander of the Legion, reported after eighteen months of conscientious investigation that anti-American charges leveled against the organization were without basis.

In spite of the obvious facts that the educational function of UNESCO is sorely needed today, that its activities have been applauded, and that it has been cleared by conscientious researchers whose integrity and patriotism cannot be impugned, the American Legion on October 12 deplored the use of material furnished by UNESCO for use in the schools and urged Congress to repeal the laws creating the U.S. National Commission.

One is baffled by what to say in the face of such myopic judgment. How can an organization composed of veterans, many of whom have seen the pressing need for education throughout the world, denounce an organization which promotes that education and international understanding? One Legionnaire, Mr. Harry Truman, said "They're a fine bunch of kids. Most of them knew what they were fighting about. But they seem to have forgotten." We agree with Mr. Truman. But if our present world does not remind them of that for which they once fought, we are at a loss to know what will. And there are some days when most U.S. citizens simply do not have time to listen to kids.

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The Political Novel Today

"THE AFFIRMATION, IF THERE IS ONE, NO LONGER PROCLAIMS THE PROLETARIAN; IT ASSERTS RATHER THE PEASANT"

MICHAEL HARRINGTON

DURING the instants of great stress in Dostoievski's novels, particularly in the presence of death, details are meticulously recorded. Insects are often described: "The moonlight grew quietly and his heart thumped more violently, until it became painful. The stillness continued. . . A fly woke up and bumped against the window pane, and set up a whining buzz." The terrible moments, Dostoievski seems to be saying, reduce man to his most basic self, until life is all essence.

The terrible moments of the twentieth century have done this same thing to the political novel; they have reduced it to basic categories, from politics to metaphysics, from the macrocosm of collective struggle to the microcosmic world of individual decision. In the work of André Malraux, Arthur Koestler, Ignacio Silone, Manes Sperber, the affirmation, if there is one, no longer proclaims the proletarian, the urban citizen of the society of the future. It asserts rather the peasant, singing like Ecclesiastes that there is a time for sowing and a time for reaping. At the end of Malraux's *Walnut Trees,* for example, the eternal peasants are seen in the very midst of the battle—enduring.

The contrast between this perspective and that of the nineteenth century is sharp. With all of his hatred of both bourgeois and worker, Balzac remained fundamentally interested in the action of men in classes. Zola's miners, Stendhal's liberals, Dickens' poor: these were social groups, and the literary tradition in which they existed is the justification of Trilling's remark that social classes are "the field of the problem of knowledge" in the novel. Indeed, the social classes are still with us in European political writing, but as background to the individual anguish, not as a field of knowledge.

In discussing this transition, there is much that can be said of how modern history—the failure of the socialist movement to take power, the rise of fascism, World War II and the Cold War—has made the development almost inevitable. Knowledge of our history gains us knowledge of our novels. But there is also another, and extremely important, way of approaching contemporary political novelists: with the conviction that knowledge of their works gains us knowledge of our history. In this regard let us consider the novels of Koestler, Malraux, and Silone.

ARTHUR KOESTLER as a novelist and political propagandist, is a first-rate second-rater—a militant secularist who is forever writing theodicies. Whatever ideology he happens to be committed to at any given time, his commitment is always cosmic, his unit of time, at minimum, the epoch and often enough the aeon. All of this would apparently mark him as at a far remove from any existential introspection. Yet, paradoxically enough, he is the European political novelist who has taken the transition from the collective to the individual farthest—to religion.

In every one of Koestler's books, fiction and nonfiction, the ultimate focus is a religious experience which embarrasses him. In his earliest novel, *Spartacus,* Marx appears as half-Essence, half-Moses, speaking of the dialectic as the "law of detours." This allegory was not accidental. In every one of Koestler's later books, especially those written out of a deep despair, the solution to the political crisis is essentially a religious one. The specific image in which Koestler states this is that of a new order of Franciscans without Christ who will rise out of the ruins of Europe and preach a secular Sermon on the Mount.

Yet Koestler is embarrassed by this religious concern. In one of the volumes of his autobiography, he looks back upon his experience in Franco's prisons. He mentions that he had a moment of almost mystical exaltation—the "oceanic sense," as Freud called it—and that he does not like to speak of it. And indeed, the vision of the unChristian Franciscans is more or less smuggled into his work. Were it not so persistent, one might dismiss it as a literary artifice.

Koestler's secularism is a repeated theme too, most recently in an article in *Encounter* in which Koestler

Mr. Harrington writes frequently on political and cultural matters for The Commonweal and other publications.

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once again attacks religion and once again calls for a religious revival. If we can speak of the socialist movements of our time as inheritors of the Christian doctrine of Providence, as the politicalization of St. Augustine, then what has happened to Koestler is clear: he cannot go back, his only hope is to project a synthesis of Yogi and Commissar which he himself regards as impossible.

Since Koestler is not profound, he is all the more revealing of the immediate situation: he is a journalist in the exact sense of the word. In his work there is the ambiguity of the unresolved tension of politics and the individual in a time of vast social upheaval. Yet the aeons and epochs are precisely the function of a personal anguish, and this is, after all, the total inversion of Marx's theory of alienation and of the major nineteenth century European political tradition.

André Malraux presents a similar situation, although he is sharply differentiated from Koestler by, among other things, the magnitude of his gifts. In his political novels, especially in *Man's Fate,* and in his art criticism, Malraux centers everything around one problem: the individual must die. The struggle of the Chinese in the Twenties, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, these are but the stage on which the Pascalian drama is played. For Malraux, the essential thing about his revolutionaries is not their political struggle but rather the transcendence of their deaths. The same is true of his artists. They conquer death by the immortality of their paintings and sculpture. Here again, the collective is the function of the individual, although in this case, it is not only the social group but the aesthetic tradition as well which is involved.

This is not, of course, to imply that the "real" political novel is absolutely divorced from the individual. Stendhal's Waterloo, his Julian, his Fabrice, are an obvious contradiction of such an attitude. And yet, to use Trilling's phrase, his "field of knowledge" was social, his characters can no more be imagined apart from their class and milieu than can Balzac's. With *Man's Fate,* and with all of Malraux's work, it is different. His heroes are aristocrats of existence, not of class; his China is his Spain. It is not surprising that Malraux's most developed philosophic notion, that of metamorphosis, seeks to bridge epochs, to unite history in a communion of the fundamental. For him, the African mask, the violence of Goya, Picasso, are various aspects of the Pascalian concern, not the products of different cultures.

Ignacio Silone presents another problem. He was among the very first of the major twentieth century writers to break from the Communist party. From the start, he has been concerned with the peasant. Therefore, one might be tempted to conclude, he is the least political, a sort of Robert Frost of the Abruzzi. And yet, Silone is the only one of these writers who has made a synthesis. In his work there is no tension of Yogi and Commissar, of morality and politics, nor are his heroes aristocratic and tragic figures like Malraux's Kyo or Goya. Silone's meditation upon the peasant fits into the general pattern which I have been describing; the manner of his affirmation does not. For him, the peasant is not a literary convention, a negative deduction from the real or supposed inadequacies of the worker; for him, the peasant is reality.

He shows the same kind of concern which marks Koestler and Malraux, the transition from proletarian to peasant, the tremendous impact of the failure of the European revolution. But it is within a different context, one of affirmation—an unMarxian belief in the mission of the peasantry as a class in politics. In an interview which Silone gave last year he named Joachim de Fiore as one of his heroes. The choice was fitting. Joachim, the exalter of Francis of Assisi and hater of tyranny, the Italian heretic, the Christian Franciscan, provides a far more concrete image than does Koestler's vision of his unChristian Franciscans. And, of course, the attitude towards religion which runs through Silone's work is quite different from the attitude of Koestler. Silone reminds one of the famous remark about George Santayana: that he firmly believed there was no God and that the Virgin Mary was His mother.

Clearly there are significant differences between Koestler, Malraux and Silone. Yet there is also a common concern which represents a significant break with the tradition of the European political novel. Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, the brothers Goncourt, Dickens, George Eliot—their field of knowledge is indeed the social class. Yet Koestler, Malraux, Silone and others, like Camus, Sperber, and Sartre, are in various kinds of reaction to the most class conscious movement Europe has known. For them, politics, like the crack in Auden's teacup, has opened up a lane to the land of the dead, to the abyss. And their fundamental concern is consequently existential rather than historical or social.

This can be seen by comparing their work to a writer who did not react in their way to the same disillusionment: George Orwell. Orwell refused the cosmic and the metaphysical. In response to Spain, he wrote a moving essay, but a *political* essay; in response to the tragedy of the Russian Revolution, he wrote a political allegory; in response to totalitarianism, he wrote a political projection. In his brilliant essay on James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution,* it is precisely the mystifying of politics which irritates him the most. This is not to say that his work is inhuman, or anything like it. One can see Balzac or Stendhal or, most certainly, Dickens,

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giving the same kind of a response, and this is simply not true of Koestler, Malraux, Silone, or Camus.

Orwell also serves to illustrate another important point about this process: that it is not mechanistically conceived, that one cannot cite certain political events and say, *therefore* André Malraux, *therefore* Albert Camus writes in this way. Orwell reacted to the same events that these writers did, and he did so in a fundamentally different way. The causation of the transition in a certain part of the European political novel is thus a complex thing, and cannot be accounted for by any abstract equations of reality and thought.

I HAVE discussed this trend in terms of the political novel alone, analyzing similarities and differences within that limited context. Yet the phenomenon which confronts us is not simply a matter of politics, or

even of content; it ramifies throughout every aspect of modern literature, it is an impact upon form as well as upon subject matter.

In the recently translated *Myth of Sisyphus,* Albert Camus made this point with his usual clarity: "Never, perhaps, have minds been so different. And yet we recognize as identical the spiritual landscapes in which they get under way. Likewise, despite such dissimilar zones of knowledge, the cry that terminates their itinerary rings out in the same way." And in an essay on point of view in art published some years ago, Ortega y Gasset attempted to integrate the tendency toward the subjective into a historical development which he dates from the Renaissance. For him, the process has reached dead-end; he concludes with the cry, "Where shall we find the material to reconstruct the world?"

This larger context in which the transition in the political novel forms but one case can be seen clearly in the work of writers whom we usually think of as alien to politics, writers like Proust and Virginia Woolf. In both of them, social classes still have their importance. In this respect, they are more traditional than Camus, Malraux or Koestler, probably because they never identified with the aspirations of the working class, because their vantage is not one of the failures of a movement of hope but of the destruction of an *ancien régime*. Nevertheless, they participate in the same trend as the political novelists—but in a different way.

In *Mimesis,* Erich Auerbach speaks of Virginia Woolf and the novelists like her. He writes: "This shift of emphasis expresses something that we might call a transfer of confidence: the great exterior turning points and blows of fate are granted less importance; they are credited with less power of yielding decisive information concerning the subject; on the other hand there is confidence that in any random fragment plucked from the course of life at any time the totality of its fate is contained and can be portrayed." The literary tendency which Auerbach describes is, of course, remote from the world of the political novel. It expresses itself in the techniques of extreme subjectivity, of stream of consciousness and shifting point of view; it is an attitude which we associate with art for art's sake.

Yet the aesthete and the political share a common world and a common experience. They react in fundamentally different ways, but with a certain continuity. The subjectivity and formal inventiveness of a Virginia Woolf or Proust is the correlative of Malraux's aristocratic heroes and Silone's peasants, a transition from an ordered, structured world to disorder and the individual. Woolf's university people and Malraux's revolutionaries have both been forced to basic and fundamental categories, though in different ways.

In dealing with the aesthetic, subjective aspect of this development, Auerbach wrote: "At the time of the first World War and after—in a Europe unsure of itself, overflowing with unsettled ideologies and ways of life, and pregnant with disaster—certain writers distinguished by instinct and insight find a method which dissolves reality into multiple and multivalent reflections of consciousness." We could just as easily substitute "certain political novelists" for "certain writers" and conclude the sentence by saying that they find a method which dissolves classes into reflections of the individual consciousness in the presence of tragedy and death.

Moreover, this trend is not confined to literature alone. Perhaps the most despairing and anguished expression of the experience of our time occurs in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* where the tragic perspective is carried to its extreme conclusion. Freud is not afraid of asking: has civilization been worth it; is the price of society—all society—the maiming of the individual and the instinctual? Indeed, it has often been pointed out that the dis-

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solving of consciousness in psychoanalysis is quite in line with the subjective techniques of the modern novel. In other words, the tendencies which we find in literature, in Malraux as well as in Virginia Woolf, are not confined to fiction alone; they are part of a total cultural process.

Here again, the reaction of the political novelists to the world of the twentieth century appears as a complex, unmechanistic phenomenon. For not only is there variation among the political writers themselves, but there is also a larger context in which their manner of response must be compared to that of "aesthetic" writers and even to non-literary disciplines such as psychoanalysis. The latter two cases have been pointed out at length by many writers. The case of the transition in the political novel has not. And it is all the more important for it is there, in books concerned with social struggle, that we would least expect to find this continuity with the subjectivity of a Virginia Woolf or a Proust.

WHAT does all this imply with regard to the world in which we live? Is all of this simply to provide an unassailable base for pessimism, an attitude of retreat?

Of the writers whom I have discussed here, Silone is most important answering this question, because he is distinguished from a writer like Koestler by the fact that he has found his synthesis. He left the Communist Party, he returned to the peasant, to the symbolism of Joachim de Fiore and of the *jacquerie*. But this is for him a starting point and not a dead end, a beginning of struggle and of hope. His peasant is not merely the source for a meditation, as he is in Malraux's *Walnut Trees;* he is a call to action and a reason for fighting.

At the very conclusion of *Mimesis,* Auerbach sees a Silone-like reaction as a possible outcome of the breakdown and dissolution which he has described. For in this return to the basic and to the fundamental, there is the possibility that man will find the material for a new synthesis. This element is present also in Camus' *Rebel,* although it is there tentative, hypothetical—though I doubt that it will ever come to the cosmic Mr. Koestler. Whether the way of Silone and Camus will prevail—whether the terrible experience of our times represents a dying in order to die, or a dying in order to live—is impossible to predict. But how a man should choose is not.

If the change that has taken place in the political novel, and in our culture as a whole, has revealed to us the impact of despair and the depths of failure, it may also discover for us the resources of struggle. In a few writers—Silone and Camus are the best examples—this has already begun to happen. It amounts to more than a reflection of the world in which we live: it is a moral reaction to this world, a summons not to hopelessness but, as Silone wrote recently, to the choice of comrades, to the complex opting for justice—that eternal fugitive from the victors' camp.

CONVERSATION IN FRANCE

Contrasts in Elegance

WALLACE FOWLIE

THE wit of the French, their rapid manipulation of ideas, their deft analysis of sentiments often give to foreigners a false impression of facility and even peril. Yet their facility cannot be denied, and facility, almost by definition, is perilous. French newspapers announce daily the end of the old order, an inevitable uprising of such proportions that every Frenchman will participate and all other countries will be involved in no time at all. But if you look out from the café window where you are reading the newspaper, the street will seem the same as always, teeming and yet orderly with that uncanny sense of precision and elegance and swiftness which the French demonstrate on all public occasions and in all private meditations.

Likewise, the new French books each year seem at first dangerous in the very ease with which they upset theories and characters and genres. But we forget that the French mind, even the most learned and the most profound, is always youthful, and therefore always appears destructive and imposing. Other nations are more solemn and perhaps more efficient than the French. They take less time to reflect and to converse and to form the brilliant abstractions

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about human activity which constitute some of the glory of French culture.

On my first visit to France, at the age of nineteen, I had been in Paris for several weeks before having any real experience with the conversation and the wit of that country. Then it came to my attention, in full force, on one overpowering occasion. Before leaving for France, I had done some work for a friend who was writing her doctoral dissertation on the French symbolist poet, Stuart Merrill. Through this friend's kindness, I received in Paris an invitation to meet Mme. Stuart Merrill, a Belgian lady, at the home of the Belgian poet, Albert Mockel, who lived in Rueil, just outside of Paris. I knew slightly the work of M. Mockel, who belonged to the symbolist group, and was eager to meet him, largely, I must confess, because I hoped he would speak of Mallarmé, whom he had known personally.

The invitation was for lunch. It was a warm Sunday in August. I walked down the avenue from the station and rang the bell at an ivy-covered gate through which I could see nothing. I was ushered through the house to the garden where M. and Mme. Mockel, Mme. Merrill and two other guests were waiting. These five people, of approximately the same age—in their early sixties—despite their formal manners tried immediately to put me at my ease. As I spoke with one, the others did not listen. I found myself moving quite naturally from one to the other and almost did not realize that they, and especially M. Mockel, directed the scene.

They seemed from another world. The two men were impeccably dressed in black morning suits and the women in light-colored summer dresses which matched the perfect French garden. They spoke at first, but casually, of symbolist writers, because I had been introduced as one knowing the poetry of Stuart Merrill. They made me feel pride in the fact that Merrill was originally an American. But soon they dropped the subject of poetry and literature, and it was impossible to get them back to that subject during the rest of my visit.

I BEGAN, on that occasion, to realize many things about the French turn of mind. Never was indoctrination more graciously bestowed. Throughout the conversation, a tone of reasonableness dominated. No matter what topic was discussed: the quality of the fruit that season or the prose style of Colette, the effort made was always to appear reasonable, equitable, lucid, rather than to appear "right." Sincerity of tone counted far above infallibility of judgment.

As I think back to that now distant Sunday afternoon, I don't remember any question being settled satisfactorily, I can't remember the desire on anyone's part to decide an issue. But I remember a large repertory of stories and subjects, and the evident pleasure taken in stirring up problems and exposing them. Beside the real garden of flowers, a garden of ideas was arranged and planted. There was never the shadow of displeasure on the part of anyone, because no one was interested in forcing an opinion. I believe that I acknowledged to myself that day that opinions of other people are not disagreeable but only the willfulness in imposing these opinions when we don't wish to welcome them.

The table was in a kind of annex to the house, almost in the garden itself. The shades had been drawn because of the intense sunlight, and the room was in a soft golden glow. The table was long and narrow. M. Mockel at one end and Mme. Mockel at the other end, seemed at a great distance from the rest of us who were seated along the sides. The luncheon itself was my first elaborate French meal. Course succeeded course, and wine succeeded wine. I was bewildered by the organization and the variety, and delighted by the gastronomy.

As we were taking our seats, Mme. Mockel turned to me and announced that at the end of the meal we were to have an American specialty, something that was very unusual in France, and which had been ordered for the day's menu in my particular honor. I soon gave up trying to imagine what American dish could possibly harmonize with this food. But there was constant reference to the surprise awaiting me and which the others, quite visibly, were looking forward to. It was a theme for banter, but it was also serious. I have no exact memory of the culinary successes of that Sunday, but I do remember a fish in a sauce with capers, the like of which I had never tasted, and a roasted guinea fowl with the feathers replaced in some way to give it the semblance of a winged bird.

Finally the moment did come for the American dish. Inwardly I was apprehensive, but outwardly I pretended great eagerness to behold the prize and patriotic gratitude for this inclusion of an American memento in an otherwise severely classical French meal. The table was cleared and plain white plates were put down before each one of us. As soon as the maid came in from the kitchen, we all strained and turned in order to catch the first glimpse. I saw in one flash what the novelty was, and my heart stood still with the first thought that this was a bad joke. On a silver platter the maid carried a bottle of tomato catsup! Heinz' variety, I believe it was. I quickly saw that the Mockels were dead serious. Mme. Mockel first daintily tipped the bottle upside down and shook it until some of the contents spurted out on the white Limoges plate. Then each

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of us in turn performed the same ceremony. Nothing to go with it. Tomato catsup alone. I decided not to expose its common use, but to partake of it as the others began doing. Their comments, abundant and laudatory, covered up whatever words I tried to articulate.

But it was not the absolute end, fortunately. A gigantic apple tart (*une tarte aux pommes*), composed of what seemed to be hundreds of thin slices of apple glazed over with some amber substance, was served as the dessert. The incredibly rich cream sauce which accompanied it caused all after-taste of Heinz' tomato catsup to disappear, and my attention returned to the manners and the speech of my hosts and their friends.

The ritual of a French dining room table was clearer to me after that luncheon. The table was a kind of altar prepared for a feast-day, for a celebration. And the speech of the banqueters was bedecked for the occasion. Effortlessly their thought was adorned before it was made audible. The garden seemed prepared for that very Sunday and that very occasion. The dresses of the three ladies and the rich dark coats of the two gentlemen gave me the same impression visually of preparation as their conversation did. The flowers had been trained and disciplined to grow according to the pattern of the gardener, and the words spoken by these Belgian and French people had the same finished effect of beauty and artifice, of control and constraint. Even the moments of agitation and excitement guarded a sense of measure and proportion.

I knew there must be a goal in this conversation I listened to and participated in in a minor way. But I was never able to formulate the goal, and concluded that it was probably unconscious on the part of the speakers themselves. Save for M. Mockel, whose mind had exceptional finesse, I should not have called these people thoughtful or reflective in any unusual sense, but the grace of their eloquence and its promptness gave them the appearance of men and women for whom matters of the mind and the spirit predominated.

Nature was constantly called upon to illustrate whatever abstractions were under discussion. Or it was used simply to provide interludes in the conversation. The Mockels' and Mme. Merrill's knowledge of the symbolist movement and of French literary figures did not surprise me, but their familiarity with nature did. The ease with which they introduced comments on the cherry trees in the garden, and the ripening pears along the espalier wall where each pear was carefully encased in a paper bag, and the habits of a pair of swallows who had a nest under one of the eaves, struck me forcibly.

The history of poetry and the art of gardening were so naturally fused that I began to believe this one of the signs of the very old culture I was observing for the first time. Under the patterns and the themes of the dialogue, I sensed an almost frenzied and voluptuous love of France. The entire scene involving the swallows, a beautiful black cat, a bowl of brilliant anemones, and forays with sentences from which those participating always emerged triumphant, was organically French. I realized this much later when I had the opportunity of seeing it recapitulated on other occasions.

Something of the preparedness of conversation, and something of the elegance and ceremoniousness of eating exist on all levels of French society. The manners of speech and the attentiveness to food are observable with the simplest classes and even with the poorest. This trait of French characteristics must strike all foreigners who have the chance to watch the highest classes of the bourgeoisie and the least well educated and the most underpriviliged of the people. (How difficult it is to translate *le peuple* or *les petits gens!*) We expect from the cultivated classes of any country, but especially of France, an ease and elaborateness of manner, but we are surprised to find such traits of *le haut monde* innately visible in the simplest of the French, in servants, for example, in workmen, in all those who toil for others.

ON a recent return to Paris, in 1954, I called on Mme. Céleste Albaret whose name figures in Marcel Proust's novel and who served Proust as housekeeper between 1913 and his death in 1922. She owns a rather dilapidated hotel on the rue des Canettes, a small street which goes into the Place Saint Sulpice. I climbed the stairs to the second floor where the hotel office was located, and there against a background of mail boxes and keys I waited until Mme. Albaret ended a conversation with one of her hotel guests. At least I imagined it was Mme. Albaret from her age and from the tranquil authority with which she spoke. When the right moment came, I introduced myself as an American who was a student of Proust's work. She smiled and said she had already known why I was there, that she had seen many of my compatriots, and admirers of Proust from other countries. She received me then with such a regal air and such serenity, that I had from the beginning of my visit, which was to last two hours, the impression of a great privilege being granted me.

This was certainly true. As I listened to Céleste speak of Proust, I realized that she had rehearsed the account and the anecdotes countless times before, but I listened eagerly to the slightest detail, and hoped that by some of my questions, I was encouraging her to discuss more than the commonplaces of her knowl-

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edge. Through the years her cult for Proust has deepened into a worship that is almost fanatical. "He was my master," she said, "and I think of him now as—almost a saint." The pause she made just before saying "saint" was not to search for the right word, but to mark deliberately the emphasis she wished to give.

Montaigne divided French speech into two categories. The first, *"le boute hors si aisé,"* is the rapid facility of self-expression which I heard at the Mockels many years ago, and which Montaigne claims to be the speech of lawyers and the more prevalent in France. The second is the slow, elaborate, premeditated speech, which Céleste Albaret uses, and which she perhaps inherited from her master, Marcel Proust. This is the tempo used, according to Montaigne, in the sermons of preachers, *"les tardifs."* I do not mean to imply that Céleste spoke with unctuousness. No, it was a deliberateness tinged with dogmatism. She gave the impression of wanting to impress her listener with the fact that her testimony is unique and precious. As well

it is! One senses that her excessive kindness, and especially the details of her kindness, are modeled, perhaps slightly, perhaps extensively, on Proust's kindness and on his manner of speech.

Anecdotes of tenderness alternated with some of cruelty and stricture. Céleste disliked Gide, whom she had to admit often to Proust's study. In announcing his visit to Proust, she would always say, *"C'est le faux moine."* To call Gide behind his back "the false monk" seemed a recompense for the duty of admitting the writer to the apartment. Those who have written about Céleste Albaret have usually called her a kind of domestic tyrant who ruled over the daily life of Proust and who might, if she herself preferred, refuse to admit this friend or that visitor. I was curious that she used the word "tyrant" in speaking of Proust, but with such an accent of tenderness and affection that I fully realized Céleste to be of the race of those who find pleasure in being tyrannized.

During the ceremonial of a cognac, my imminent leave-taking turned Céleste's attention a bit to me. The fact that I was an American pleased her, because she owed much to the kindness and generosity of the American writer, Mrs. Mina Curtiss, who translated a large selection of Proust's letters. With deep pride, Céleste reminded me that the volume prepared by Mrs. Curtiss is dedicated to her. This was tangible proof of her participation in scholarship on Proust, on the preservation of his memory, on the growing cult of his name.

The slow steadiness of her speech was remarkable. It was now punctuated by the measured and deliberate sippings of the cognac. Like the ending of a Beethoven sonata, which at many points seems to have reached the conclusion, only to begin again with more fullness and vitality, the final part of Céleste's conversation went on, and every physical move on my part to leave, would be impeded by a fresh intonation and a new theme. I imagined going down the stairs many times before I actually did.

WHEN, at last, I was outside on the rue des Canettes on that gray wet February day of 1954, I experienced a feeling comparable to that felt on the sunlit Sunday afternoon of August 1930 when I left the garden and the house of Albert Mockel, and began walking down the avenue toward the station of Rueil. It was happiness at being finally alone in order to reconstruct the things which had just been said and the pictures of the people and the setting. I feared that all that richness would disappear from me and be forgotten. I hastened mentally to relive it and record it. I rehearsed phrases and intonations I had heard. On both occasions, so widely separated in time, I had had the impression of living a scene in literary history, of which some record must be kept, even if it were of a very personal nature.

Now, with some perspective in time, and after a rereading of Montaigne, I realize that I experienced on the two occasions of Rueil and the rue des Canettes, the two main types of French speech, the rapid *"boute hors si aisé"* of some of the last survivors of symbolism, and the slow *"tardifs"* in the woman who perhaps best remembers Marcel Proust today. Two extremes of tempi in conversation, and two extremes of French society, and yet one basic level of attention, graciousness and intelligence.

The goal of the speech, in the summer garden of Rueil and in the chilly Paris hotel office, was not to instill conviction or to reach a conclusion. It was quite simply the goal of human communication. Communication about what? Well, it seemed to be about the present, but illuminated and explained by the past. The sovereignty and the example of the past are never absent from the mind of the living Frenchman. There is a singular dynamics of French conversation, which creates as it renovates, and which is closely related to the grace of French manners which have become since the seventeenth century, I imagine, less stylized and more ardent.

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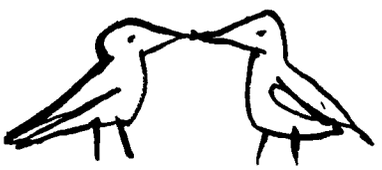

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THE NEED FOR UNITY

Experiment In Learning

MICHAEL P. FOGARTY

IN 1952, when the debate on European unity was at its height, the University Federalist Union ran at the Catholic University of Nijmegen a conference of university teachers to consider ways of developing European studies. This movement was at first frankly political. But little by little the political character died out of it, and this autumn a full-scale congress was held at the University of Trieste, with the help of American as well as European funds, to float it off as a permanent, purely academic, Association of European University Teachers. The congress, as it turned out, represented the convergence of two main problems, one of the universities as such and the other of Europe.

European universities are conscious as never before of what Sir Walter Moberley popularized a few years ago as the "Crisis of the University," the difficulty of reconciling the needs of specialization with those of general culture. We have the scientist who can carry off a brilliant Ph.D., but may be almost illiterate in his own language. When I began to teach science as well as arts students, I found that "professor" is spelt with one "f" in the Faculty of Arts but with two by the scientists; not always, I must admit, but often enough to make you think. Or we have the humanist who can dissert superbly on the particle "da" of the Heideggerian *Dasein* (I did not make that one up), but is ignorantly contemptuous of the technologist whose culture, in my experience at any rate, is often much wider than his own. We have graduates in French whose knowledge of the language and literature is magnificent, but whose grasp of its European and its Christian setting falls far behind.

In the world of research, as apart from teaching, many of us are beginning to find that specialization without the aid of a wider perspective yields diminishing returns. An economist, twenty years ago, could get by on economics and a little common sense. Today he will find it hard even to state his problems correctly, let alone to solve them, unless he has something like a professional knowledge of what the political scientist is finding out about the state, the sociologist about the class and group structure, and the psychologist about frames of reference and learning processes. He needs

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to keep an eye on what the engineers are up to with automation, and he is no longer quite happy about that neat dichotomy between the world of science and the world of values which used to be taught so confidently by Max Weber or Lionel Robbins. He may not have found the right formula yet; but he—or many of him—is beginning to be pretty sure that somehow values must be incorporated into the frame of reference of the social scientist as such.

There are many promising lines for an answer to this problem of specialization and general culture, though they have a confusing way of leading in opposite directions. Some people want more team research; others remind us that the day of the pioneer plowing his lonely furrow is by no means over even in the natural sciences, let alone in the humanities. Some say that the answer to the over-specialized student is not less specialization but better specialization; by all means see that each subject is taught with due reference to its wider context, they say, but do not forget that the only truly cultivated man is the one who knows at least one subject or field of study right to the bottom. Others are interested in increasing the number and range of subjects normally studied, in multi-subject degree schemes, and especially in encouraging students to take up subjects not usually studied at school. Others again (I am one of them) are interested in developing synthetic or "problem-centered" studies, which focus a whole group of natural or social sciences or of the humanities on the trends and problems of a certain culture or area of life; on those of engineering, or medicine, or education, or management and industrial relations, or the culture of Germany or France or Europe. And it is at this point that the Universities' problem converges with that of the militants of United Europe.

THE problems of all-Europe, or Europe as a unit, have been pushed to the front by politics, and politics are at best a secondary, rather dangerous, reason for a university to take account of a subject. The few "European militants" who raised their heads at Trieste were very quickly shot down. But, politics apart, European studies happen to meet to a pre-eminent degree the need for fields of teaching and research which offer adequate openings for specialization, yet also serve as a point of departure for a wider, universal, culture—fields which open a window on the world.

Europe is that part of the earth's surface where the forces transforming the world have long met and still meet in their greatest strength. Take religion and ideology. Europe remains the world center of Catholicism and of social democracy, and to a lesser extent of Protestantism and (in its European sense) liberalism.

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If it is extended beyond the Iron Curtain, it includes the world center of Communism, and in France and Italy it has two of the most powerful Communist parties of the free world.

Europe has the oldest-established and some of the best modern industrial technology in the world; it also has some of the most acute problems of technical stagnation and lag. The contrast between advanced and under-developed countries exists in an acute form within Europe's own borders, since national incomes per head in areas such as Greece, Yugoslavia, Southern Italy, and Spain may run as low as a third or even a fifth of those in the richer countries of the North and North-West. And in the advance of the colonial or recently colonial peoples to full maturity and independence, it is European countries which carry the main burden of leadership. The world balance of power is changing from one between nations to one between continents; the question of forging Europe itself into a new continental unit is one of the main issues at stake, and two European countries, France and Britain, are responsible for leading and maintaining two other quasi-continental units, the French Union and the British Commonwealth.

This is indeed the place where forces meet. And they meet in an area with a highly developed culture, long political experience, and relatively rich resources. Here, if anywhere, is where the study of the local or continental culture and its problems should lead to conclusions of universal value.

WHAT did the Trieste conference make of all this? The main conclusion has to be read out of the various reports and resolutions, for it was never put into so many words. It refers to teaching and research methods in the study of cultures, and particularly of European culture and its various branches.

Alexis de Tocqueville describes in *L'Ancien Régime* how he read through the resolutions presented to the States-General before the French Revolution. Taken individually, he says, these resolutions were simple and reasonable enough. But it was with a kind of terror that he rose up from reading through the whole series, for it was apparent that what the people of France as a whole was resolved upon amounted to nothing less than the subversion of the whole existing social order. Looking over again the notes and resolutions of the Trieste meeting, it seems to me that they amount, though as unintentionally as in the case of the resolutions to the States-General, to the subversion of the whole existing teaching of classical and modern languages, though I must confess that I feel no particular terror at this.

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Classical studies, one resolution says, should be treated primarily as the study of a culture, not of a language, though language of course comes in as one aspect of culture; presumably the same would apply to the study of modern German or Italian. European studies, so the argument at Trieste went, can contribute to re-synthesizing that which national or faculty specialization has separated only in so far as they represent the study of a culture as a whole, or of complete segments of it in relation to the whole. What we normally think of as the language departments would seem to be the natural focus for studies of this kind. They could be helped out by a limited number of centers of all-European studies, of which some exist, as at Strasbourg, Nancy, Saarbruck, and Turin, while others need to be created.

Departments responsible for these cultural studies should try to build up inter-disciplinary research and teaching teams, drawing on historians and prehistorians, geographers, social and natural scientists, philosophers, and specialists in the study of other cultures. These teams should be international, with a regular exchange of staff and students between countries. The nucleus of each team must evidently be kept small enough to cooperate effectively and focus all the work, since otherwise the whole point of studying a culture as a unit will be lost. It is as such a nucleus group that the staff of a department of, say, French or Spanish should henceforward be understood.

I cannot speak for America. But for Europe an approach on these lines is revolutionary. It is even possible (I speak skeptically, having been to many congresses) that something practical will come of it. For the Trieste meeting was not the usual government or faculty conference. Its members were drawn from all faculties from chemistry to philosophy, as well as from all the countries of Northern, Western, and Southern Europe (including Greece and Spain) and from Yugoslavia. They came out of interest, largely at their own expense, with nothing professionally to gain. I can answer for the British delegation (fifteen of us) that we felt we had got hold of some ideas worth exploring, which we would like to take home and experiment with at leisure. And the congress took a reasonably modest, and therefore promising, view of what could be done at once. The main immediate task was one of local experiment where faculty conditions permitted, helped by the exchange of information through a permanent association as well as through the official channels of UNESCO or the Council of Europe.

Things do not happen quickly in the academic world, least of all where, as in this case, ideas are still in many ways experimental. But the further progress of this movement will, I think, be worth watching.

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THE SCREEN

"CHICKS AND DUCKS BETTER SCURRY"

FROM the moment "Oklahoma!" starts and the camera glides into the corn that is as high as an elephant's eye, you begin to get nostalgic about the whole thing; almost immediately Gordon MacRae bursts into song with "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'!" and you are completely sold on the movie. This melodious number is quickly followed by the spirited "Surrey with the Fringe on Top" in which the pretty heroine and her aunt join the cowboy in singing about his imaginary, high-stepping team that has the barnyard fowl scurrying. All in all, even those who aren't among the thirty million who saw the famous musical comedy on the stage since it first appeared in 1943 are likely to regard the Rogers and Hammerstein music and book with the special warmth that is usually reserved for the familiar.

"Oklahoma!" did make theatrical history in 1943, but since then we've had a lot of good plays and movies that use ballet and the sprightly new method in telling their stories. So now, except for being filmed in the new Todd-AO process (which has remarkable clarity and depth on a large screen), the movie version seems somewhat old-hat. This is mainly due to the lack of imagination in Fred Zinnemann's direction. Zinnemann, who has given us such outstanding films as "Teresa," "High Noon" and "From Here to Eternity," approached "Oklahoma!" as if he were doing a 1906 western, and his musical on the whole doesn't have even the light touch that made "Green Grow the Lilacs" (Lynn Riggs' original play on which, in case you have forgotten, "Oklahoma!" was based) so delightful.

But although Zinnemann failed to invest the movie with the spontaneity it should have, he was successful with individual performances. Gordon MacRae has never been better than he is as Curly, the swaggering cowboy who is finally tamed by a pretty girl; and newcomer Shirley Jones, though rather slick, is charming as this girl. Charlotte Greenwood as the girl's wise and lovable aunt and Rod Steiger as the despicable and villainous Jud turn in first-rate portrayals. And Gene Nelson plays, sings and dances the role of Will, so very impressed with Kansas

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City, with just the right flair. Unfortunately, the supposedly hilarious comedy roles (Gloria Grahame as Ado Annie, James Whitmore as her father, Eddie Albert as the peddler) have not stood the test of time and a change of medium; they now seem obvious and tiredly unfunny.

Perhaps "Oklahoma!" made the mistake of sticking too closely to the stage version. While Agnes de Mille's dances are beautifully staged (especially the "Kansas City" number, "The Farmer and the Cowboy" rollick and the sweetly feminine "Many a New Day"), they all have a theatrical touch that is uncinematic. Oliver Smith's production designs in Eastman Color are handsome throughout, but perhaps Director Zinnemann and the whole production were limited by the new Todd-AO process which was actually designed to give the screen greater scope. The depth of focus in the panoramic shots is amazing, but some of the shots are displayed just to impress us with the possibilities of Todd-AO, and their grandeur interferes with the movement of the story. Nothing interferes, though, with the good songs by Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein II or with Gordon MacRae singing about the beauty of the morning and the heart-warming glories of the Territory of Oklahoma.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

THE STAGE

SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE

A WEEK of doomed adolescents, of the lost illusions and melancholy *acedia* of middle life, and the dark pathos of age. The innocent eye looks sagely out of "The Diary of Anne Frank" (*at the Cort*): what was exposed to it—in that secret annex over the spice shop in occupied Amsterdam—was a diversity of life, passionate and wilful, generous, noble, mean; of human relationships abraded and cauterized by nearness; of experience, cruelly hedged about by circumstance, nonetheless breaking its unnatural bounds to flower richly. Mr. and Mrs. Albert Hackett have been much praised for their dramatization of this most absolute document of our time, yet my own approval must be witheld. The premise of art, I would take it, is that life is something else altogether, and we cannot be so impertinent, surely, as to imagine that we are reproducing the *reality* of Anne Frank's suffering on the stage. What we could hope to do at most is to translate those recorded facts (which have their own unalterable truth and reality) into *another kind of truth*—dramatic, poetic. And this the Hacketts have not done. Neither joy nor terror nor malice nor largeness of spirit are in these pages from Anne Frank's

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diary: only their stagey counterfeits, fragile shells of emotion, arranged by the smooth expertise of Mr. Garson Kanin's direction into a conventional pattern. When the tears come, as they finally do, it is for the reported *fact* of that young life snuffed out in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp—not for the imaginative truth of it, which is the only kind of truth we can be concerned with in drama.

Mr. Boris Aronson's gabled setting suggests a claustral pressure the play nowhere quite conveys. Mr. Joseph Schildkraut and Miss Gusti Huber decently conceal the poverty of their roles, and there are two performances of a charming reticence by Eve Rubinstein and David Levin. Miss Susan Strasberg plays Anne with a hard, vivacious, urban skill, undiluted by poetic feeling and irretrievably American in tone. Quite possibly, some persons (*vide* the newspaper critics) will find in "The Diary of Anne Frank" an experience of genuine intensity and truth; I did not. I thought only of the real Anne—of that soft, eager face, and the fine eyes luminous with a response to life—and of how she might have penciled furiously in that diary which is the permanent record of her spirit: *Oh, no, they have gotten it all wrong. It wasn't that way at all.*

THE uses of experience are explored by Mr. N. C. Hunter in "A Day by the Sea" (*Closed at the ANTA Playhouse*). A country house in Dorset is his setting, and through its stately halls, his decent, godless personages carry each their solitary griefs: the young widow for whom emotion is a remembered luxury; the anxious diplomat whose white papers have turned to ashes in his mouth; the gallant, sponging doctor with his nest of empty gin bottles behind the dresser; the old mountaineer, blinking in the sun, for whom the last Everest will be death. Mr. Hunter's writing has civility, distance and wit; the moral depths of his situations are sounded with tenderness and sensibility, their exact quality of desperation beautifully placed. Yet the play is a small one: its first act an immense clutter of indirections, its last an arranged chronicle of defeat. Mr. Hunter artfully recreates the Chekhov silhouette, but not the dramatist's full face of personality; what is absent from the Englishman's vision is precisely *resistance,* the gross and gritty, the wilful—together with a large poetic intuition of the movement of society. The elegiac mood, so beautifully sustained, has inevitably exacted its price.

Mr. and Mrs. Hume Cronyn (Jessica Tandy) bring their personal distinctions to the play, though neither—vocally or by temperament—seemed to me well at ease. Mr. Dennis King splendidly 'does' the tippling doctor, and Miss Megs Jenkins evokes a passage of spontaneous and most delicately controlled pathos. The production, however competent, is subtly not British, and

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its texture cannot rival the peculiar dazzle and lustre, the rhythmic dilation of reality, that mesmeric, hazy autumnal bloom and perfection which so exquisitely characterized Sir John Gielgud's triumphant London presentation of the same work.

"THE Wooden Dish" (*at the Booth*), by Mr. Edmund Morris, belongs to what I have come morosely to call the 'how-do-you-want-your-eggs' school of drama. A relentless stream of 'realistic' chit-chat—of slamming doors and recriminations, platitudes and domestic pieties—obscures its central human and dramatic concern, which is exclusively that of the place of the impoverished aged in our society. Indeed, so intent is Mr. Morris on furnishing the rather tacky interior of his Texas scene, that he almost blunts our perception of how occasionally adroit and honest a writer he is, with no moral *parti pris,* and a sensitive alertness to the inescapable pain of the family situation.

Mr. Louis Calhern has chosen to direct "The Wooden Dish," as well as to interpret its central role —an obvious blunder. The piece might have been played for malice, venom, speed—anything to animate its threatening heaviness—yet Mr. Calhern has settled for a genteel acrimony. As actor, he draws another of his picturesque portraits, visually charming, but inwardly cold and sly. There are facets to this character —an ornery streak, a debility which is not at all pretty —which Mr. Calhern sentimentally chooses to ignore. He fails, consequently, to project the melodramatic power of Mr. Morris' last scene, and achieves, instead, but a dribble of conventional pathos which left, I am sorry to report, hardly a wet eye in the house.

MISS Sally Benson's 'The Young and Beautiful" (*at the Longacre*), a pastiche of stories by Scott Fitzgerald, provides the most satisfying of these four occasions. Miss Benson begins with a bright palette her portrait of Chicago *circa* 1914—a world of tea-dancing at the Blackstone, of the Maxixe and the Castle Walk, and of girls who are 'pash' for boys with walking sticks and slightly randy reputations—yet imperceptibly the colors darken. The vivacious Josephine Perry, with her morbid voracity for 'life', her intense American desire to know and to feel only at the point of ecstasy, her cold pleasure in watching the impress of her spirit on the world, also discovers the use of experience: insensibility. She is but another victim of the celebrated Fitzgerald malady, emotional bankruptcy: like Dick Diver, like Fitzgerald himself, she has drawn on moral resources for which there will be no credit allowed.

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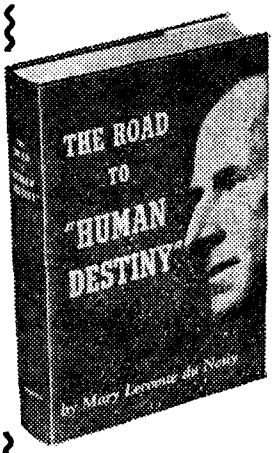

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The play has economy and wit and a penetrating astringency of mind. Miss Benson brings off her scenes and cameo portraits with a flinty, chiseled touch; affectionately, but without condescension, she records the flavor of the period. I like, too, her critical attitude towards American experience, her subtle, pointed investigation of what Mr. Lionel Trilling has called "the career of spirit among things." If there is any fault in "The Young and Beautiful," it lies perhaps in the nature of the material. The knowledge of self to which Josephine comes, however dramatic, is essentially a novelist's insight, or the 'epiphany' of a short story: it demands a fullness of comment the coarser stage cannot supply. We take leave of Josephine at the very moment her real drama of consciousness begins, and for Miss Benson's climax to be more than a *fait divers,* or a kind of moral sensation, the seed of awareness should have been planted much earlier.

The production is rich and tangible, full of original pleasures: Peter Brandon's sinister Lake Forest *roué* chiefly, but also the playing of Douglas Watson, Jane McArthur and James Hickman. Miss Lois Smith impersonates the ravening Josephine, and her piquant beauty and electric intelligence brilliantly sustain a performance which yet demands some modulation and relief. Superbly, though, Miss Smith takes us to the deathly hollowness at the center of Josephine's experience—that point, as Mr. Marius Bewley has so rightly observed of another Fitzgerald heroine, where the American dream merges with the American debutante's dream. And it is as that other heroine that we shall next see Josephine—called Daisy now, and sitting in the kitchen of her house at West Egg, conspiring with her husband "in natural intimacy" to allow the death of the golden Gatsby, with whom she had once shared so vivid a faith in the possibilities of life.

RICHARD HAYES.

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

The St. Lazare Retreat House of Spring Lake, Mich., which is conducted by the Vincentian Fathers, seeks donations of appropriate books and magazines for the house library. A number of the retreatants the year round are college graduates; many, however, are not. Used books and back issues of Catholic periodicals will be warmly welcomed. . . . Joseph Rohde, of 1110 S. W. Washington Street, Portland 6, Oregon, is a disabled war veteran who has written that he is eager to have back issues of Catholic periodicals "or any old or new books." . . . . The Mother Superior of St. Teresa's Carmelite Convent, Ernakulam, South India, would be grateful to any readers of The Commonweal who would send her "old spiritual books, old school books and equipment for classrooms like Catechism Charts."

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Lost Personalities in a Modern Setting

CARDS OF IDENTITY. By Nigel Dennis. Vanguard. $3.75.

By ANTHONY BAILEY

WHEN this very amusing and provocative book appeared in England some months ago Nigel Dennis was compared with every considerable modern humorist and satirist: Huxley, Waugh, Orwell—as well as with less common names like Miss Compton-Burnett. Probably the omission of Kafka and Lewis Carroll will be noticed; and they are now mentioned, not because this process of comparison is of much value to reader, critic, or author, but merely to complete the list.

This name-throwing is instructive, however, in one limited sense. From some books an idea of the character of the writer can be established. Not so with *Cards of Identity*. After the first hundred pages the question plagues you: Who is Mr. Dennis? In search of an answer one finds the fortunate photograph and scant information the publishers have provided inside the back flap of the dust-jacket; there one learns that Mr. Dennis has been on the staff of *Time* and has translated the works of Alfred Adler, the Viennese psychologist. Yet remembering "opinion's but a fool, that makes us scan the outward habit by the inward man" the by-now-worried reader would be well-advised, not to read too much into this information. In the game of who's who Mr. Dennis will soon have the upper hand.

Central to this novel is "The Identity Club," a society involved in making-new where human personality is concerned. A summer session takes place in an English country house, and we are introduced to it first of all through the eyes of Henry and Florence Paradise, a middle-aged brother and sister who live near-by, parasites who exist by ingratiating themselves with neighboring gentry. When we come to them they are nearly destitute (Sir Malcolm, their last patron, has fled to Australia with the remains of his capital). The arrival of people "up at the house" seems a godsend, and Henry sets off, not suspecting that the new family is in fact the advance guard of the Identity Club, Captain and Mrs. Mallet and their son Beaufort—although "in fact" Mrs. Mallet is not Captain Mallet's wife but Beaufort's (no relation) mistress.

These chapters are superbly contrived, the reader is just a little ahead of the victims as the Mallets descend on them; and not since Wyndham Lewis's *Revenge for Love* has nervous tension been so well created. Henry is soon installed as butler, with the name and identity of Jellicoe, an old sea-dog owning a past thick with wives and nefarious deeds. Some of the irony is brilliant: earlier, before Capt. Mallet had got to work on him, "Mr. Paradise gave the gracious, accommodating smile which, though he had only used it twice before, seemed already to be an established part of his life. 'I am at your service, Captain,' he said."

The rest of the staff is gathered by shanghai-ing people from the village, and remodeling them to requirements. Among these are the doctor and the nurse, who make admirable gardeners. Mr. Dennis's insight is acute, his observation always brilliant. An atmosphere of hypnosis permeates the first hundred pages, so done that the reader is dragged into it, feeling often that he should make some resistance lest he begin to question his own identity. It is with some pleasure and some relief that he arrives at Mr. Dennis's antidote for this feeling, given in the shape of Presidential advice to club members before a tour of the grounds: ". . . let us be off and change our clothes—taking good care not to take off the underclothing that is so much a part of us. Let us also follow Mallet's suggestion and transfer plenty of loose silver from the old trousers to the new." Mallet had earlier pointed out the relation between modern hatlessness and loss of identity, and had told of several dodges: carry some money in your pocket and wrap your fingers around it; or "Often, in the last two months, I have overcome a sense of identical disintegration simply by leafing through my cheque book."

Mr. Dennis goes on to poke fun at many aspects of human nature and human endeavor, at nationality and national behavior. No foreign members attend the session this year:

> The Americans have written a very vague letter saying that they are having to testify before some committee and think it wiser not to ask for passports. Apparently there is some new movement afoot over there, according to which no change in identity is permissible after a certain age. . . . As for the French members, they say they would rather not leave the country because they may be called upon at any moment to form a *government*.

The club listens to three long papers read by three eminent members. In Father Golden Orfe, the ex-Communist priest who lives on the fame and fortune brought by his published "confessions," Dennis has formed a comic figure of some size; and perception increases in direct proportion to humor. Father Orfe's paper is a fine judgment on both the god that failed and on certain "consolations" of religion.

The writing itself is distinguished: Nigel Dennis's style, urbane and precise, is a perfect vehicle for his wit. What is less satisfactory is the novel's structure, tending to fall, towards the end, into a series of fine fragments—one, a true "Shakespeherian Rag," entitled "The Prince of Antioch," and performed by the domestic staff. Beyond this, one is given a curious impression of fluidity, in part the result of the subject and its treatment, but also perhaps an effect of too many ideas crammed into diverse dramatic techniques within a limited number

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of pages. There is a sense in which *Cards of Identity* has no firm ground one can reach and rest on. It becomes a sea—a laughing, excited sea, certainly—over which one has to swim before relaxation is again possible; although once relaxed, in retrospect, the nervous energy expended seems thoroughly well-spent.

Three Giants

JOURNEY THROUGH DREAD: A Study of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre. By Arland Ussher. Devin-Adair. $3.75.

By PHILIP J. SCHARPER

A SELF-appointed good-will ambassador, Mr. Arland Ussher, has, in previous books, explained the Irish to the English, the Jews to the Irish, and Shaw, Yeats and Joyce to the world. In this present work he attempts the same task of enlightenment for Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre. He has strung his explication of these three existentialist thinkers on a single thread: the notion of Dread. Thus, he explains Kierkegaard by the "shudder before God"; Heidegger by "the shudder before Death"; Sartre by "the shudder before The Other Person."

Such an approach has obvious advantages; it does succeed in making quite clear the complex thought of the philosophers with whom Ussher is dealing. The obvious disadvantages of this simplified approach are a clarity gained by oversimplification, and an illusory unity roughly inserted among these three thinkers.

It is not unfair to assert that Mr. Ussher becomes himself the victim of his too-easy schematization. Thus, he omits in his study of Kierkegaard the note of loving waiting and unquestioning acceptance of what God may demand of the individual. For Kierkegaard, actually, the shudder before God is merely a stage of development leading to a loving awe in the continued presence of God. Similarly, the later thought of Heidegger, which does not easily fit into the "Dread framework" of Ussher, is considered mere

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"vacuousness" and thereby becomes, for Ussher, almost pseudo-Heidegger.

The treatment of Sartre is, perhaps, the most satisfactory of the three. But even here one feels that Sartre somehow escapes the impatient gaze of Ussher; certainly neither Sartre's achievement or failure can be explained in terms of the single criterion which Ussher uses: "The Dread of the Other." In each case, Ussher seems to have sacrificed depth and subtlety of analysis to simplicity of presentation. In his haste to record the intellectual landscapes of Existentialism, he notes the mountains and rivers, but does not see the freshets, nor note the green and hidden valleys.

But the ultimate failure of this book cannot be ascribed only to Ussher's desire to simplify. It would seem to lie, as well, in his limited philosophical sensibility. It is inevitable that if we define philosophy in Ussher's terms as "a joyful wisdom," we must finally reject Existentialism, as he does, on the grounds that "it omits all of our non-rational intuitions except the single one of Dread." In such a statement, the author reveals far more of himself than he does of Existentialism.

The *locus* of Ussher's defective philosophical response and desire to simplify is, of course, in his style. In his laudable attempt to make palatable reading of philosophy he frequently trips over his own epigrams and apothegms. We may accept a description of Heidegger's style as "a Baroque catafalque of prose," but squirm uneasily at: "If the (Ontological) argument is sound, philosophy is wrong; and if it is unsound, theology is wrong." Filtered through Ussher's style and sensibility philosophy itself becomes ". . . really a simple matter: it means my vision of the world with two eyes, in which I remain the subject, with the world over against me as my object. But art is a disturbing *third eye;* it is perhaps more than a pun to call it a third 'I'." The fluency and force of his prose make Mr. Ussher eminently readable, but quite unreliable. In the

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ultimate verdict, I think, Arland Ussher's study of Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre leaves unchanged the generous estimate of his own Introduction: "Actually by far the best critiques of non-Catholic Existentialism, at least in the English speaking world, have been written by Thomists."

Search for a Self

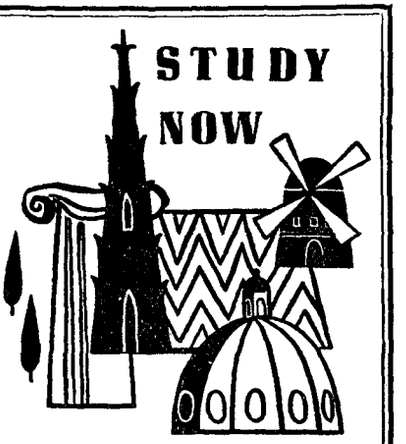
THE PILLAR OF SALT. By Albert Memmi. Translated by Edouard Roditi. Criterion. $3.75.

By JAMES GREENE

THE locale of this novel is the city of Tunis in North Africa. In early chapters its hero, Alexandre Mordekhai Benillouche, recounts his childhood in "the blind alley" on the fringes of Tunis' Jewish ghetto. They are chapters rich in exotic detail and infused with a lyric, poetic tone that lightens a theme of poverty, ignorance and oppression.

A brilliant student, Benillouche won a scholarship to the local French *Lycée*. Here he found himself, for the first time, in contact with Western culture and with Tunis' upper middle class. Gradually he abandoned the Jewish faith of his fathers and grew to despise his own class—without being able to join any other. In the years before the outbreak of World War II the West attracted him: it was cultured, scientific, rational, intellectual. Above all it was not superstitious.

But is it not inevitable that history will overwhelm the idea of history? The war interrupted for Benillouche both his studies and his drift Westward. For the corrupt center of the West was laid bare with the first swipe of the Nazi sword. Europe entered the era of concentration camps and Western justice slept; the gas chambers were built while the democracies bent low before the altars of expediency. "The whole of Europe," Benillouche observed, "revealed its basic injustice." Though he had rejected the East, he was



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himself rejected by the West. As Arthur Koestler once wrote: "No death is so sad and final as the death of an illusion."

A new identification with his race was born in the rebel. When his fellow Jews were herded into forced labor camps he rejected the privileged status he might have had as a student and joined them. His aim was to help them preserve their decency and honor before an unholy terror that was Western in both origin and nature. But the liberation came before Benillouche could close the gap he had opened between himself and his tradition. With war's end he turned to look at his past and like Lot's wife, was frozen into immobility.

Attempting to renew his studies, he took his first post-war university examination. He was asked to "analyze the influence of Condillac on John Stuart Mill." Instead he wrote of his own past, taking as his theme an incident mentioned in Genesis. In his heart Eastern poetry had replaced Western philosophy.

Memmi's book is a fascinating and complex search for identity. An impoverished Tunisian Jew, Benillouche fits nowhere, is accepted nowhere. In the closing pages of this long look behind him he writes: "I would never find the solution to my problem because I am that problem." Thus, abandoning all ideas of history Memmi deals with the raw facts that make his hero what he is. *The Pillar of Salt* is a book that could not have been written before the Second World War—too many illusions danced like sugarplums in Western heads. In Tunis those illusions melted under the heat of modern history.

Still, Memmi's hero ends with some hope that history will eventually work in his favor. He sails for Argentina with a friend. He is ready, as he has been ready all his life, to shed one more bit of flesh, to cast one more corner of his soul into shadow if in the end it will bring the reward of identity. The sorrow of Benillouche is the grief of the nations; to foretell his final despair would be to predict annihilation for man everywhere.

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On the Docks

WATERFRONT. By Budd Schulberg. *Random House. $3.95.*

By WILLIAM PFAFF

HERE again is Terry Malloy, thick, inarticulate, faintly punchy Terry—a member of the court of the mob which runs a pier on the New Jersey waterfront. Terry was given an occasional job in the loft where he could relax in a corner and read the girly magazines or a comic book. He picked up enough money to pay his way; he was pensioned by the mob because his brother was important and because Terry, in his ring days, had won his friends some money. Terry no longer is in the ring. His friends insisted that he take a dive one night, and that loss changed Terry from a challenger to a has-been. As a matter of fact, Terry himself no longer is around. His remnants are in the swampy bottomland which New Jersey calls the Jersey meadows. Terry's last engagement was with an ice-pick and a barrel of lime.

You probably will remember Terry as Marlon Brando. Marlon came to a better end than Terry, but Terry's fate is a truer one, and is an example of the things which caused Budd Schulberg to write both the film, "On the Waterfront," and this novel. Terry was happy, dumb and blind until a priest and a convent girl stirred up the mediocre coals in him. Their prodding made Terry unhappy; he resisted for a long time, but he was courageous in the same inarticulate way, and eventually he testified before the New York-New Jersey Crime Commission. Unfortunately, the Crime Commission failed to change very much on the docks, so the mob repaid Terry, and when the police found his body it could not be identified.

The waterfront has absorbed Budd Schulberg for the last few years. He went there to write the movie scenario, and stayed to write articles and this novel. They all

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are about the same thing: the control which a racketeering labor union—under the control of some businessmen, collaborating with others of prominence—exerts over the lives of the men who do the most dangerous job in American industry. In all that Schulberg has written about the docks, a Catholic priest is a central figure. The priest is patterned after Father John Corridan, Jesuit, co-director of the Xavier Labor School in the dock-side Chelsea district of New York City's lower West side. In this novel and the film, the priest is a New Jersey secular priest, an assistant in a waterfront parish. He had stuck pretty close to the parish societies until the convent girl—whose brother was killed by the mob—told him what she thought of his complacency. He fortified himself with the example of the Basque Francis Xavier who had scandalized many city officials and bishops, and with his pastor's support he too stirred up trouble on the waterfront.

So this book is the story of the movie, as the movie was the story of the book—each says the same thing in its own terms. Schulberg's original story and characters created the film, but I think it is clear that the direction of Elia Kazan and the acting of Marlon Brando had a good deal to do with the re-statement of the story in the novel. This is particularly evident in the scene where Terry's brother tries to convince him not to go to the Crime Commission, and then pulls a gun on him. The scene in the novel is more than it was on the screen, but I do not think it could have been written in this form without Brando having first acted it. There is something in it that seems outside the limit of fiction, an element of the instinct and presence of the actor's art.

This novel stands up as an independent creation; it is not Schulberg's best book, but it is a good, solid one. It suffers in the beginning from an affected toughness in narration, but that soon disappears. The toughness in dialogue is right. And in Terry and the priest, Schulberg has two really valid characters, and he explores them superbly.

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By JAMES FINN

WITH this brief novel, his second, Mr. Matthiessen engages his talents with a large theme. Traditionally enough, *Partisans* concerns the struggle of a young man to come to terms with himself and the world in which he lives. But his world is fractured and confused, the world which supplies both the headlines of our newspapers and the small violent items tucked away at the bottom of the pages.

In 1938 Barry Sand, the fourteen-year-old son of an American consul, leaves Spain with his parents. On their way, they accept aid from a stranger, Jacobi, who, in a burst of self-generated excitement, tells the boy of the changing world. "In the past thirty years in Russia and China and now in Spain, we've fought only the first battles. The true war, the Great Twentieth Century War, will go on and on and on until it's won, even though few people recognize that it exists and even less know what it means."

This meeting impresses the young Barry and causes him to question his present loyalties. Years later, when Barry hears that Jacobi is deported from America and expelled from the Party, he sets out to find him. It is this search that constitutes most of the book, the search for Jacobi, for the pattern of Barry's own world and his stake in it. We follow him through an underground Paris where sleazy, uncertain characters sell him information, through brothels and abattoirs, cemeteries and bistros.

His most constant companion and guide in this search is Marat, a Party leader, who wishes to expose to him humanity in all its squalor and oppression. He tries to impress Barry that "the rot must be cut away. . . It can't be saved by pity. We leave the individual for you to pray over, but humanity is ours, and we mean to do the job." Barry is led, finally, to the

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admirable Jacobi; his search is at an end. But the exciting conclusion reveals the complexities and ambiguities he is to live with. There is no simple, single response to his questions.

In selecting such material for this book, Mr. Matthiessen was probably aware that he was taking serious risks. For he must know that the accumulation of fact upon stubborn fact which finally persuades us would often, in a novel, seem contrived. The novelist must depend upon other resources to persuade us, and these Mr. Matthiessen has frequently failed to employ. In *Partisans* many of the situations *do* seem contrived.

The failure here stems, in large part, from the inadequate handling of the ideas with which Barry is concerned. Barry first encounters these ideas when he meets Jacobi. They are developed in conversations with his father, with Marat and other minor characters. But too often these characters do not merely express or even embody the ideas they discuss; they are engulfed by them. In spite of the insistence of detailed, sensuous observation, of personal and idiosyncratic behavior, the characters do not fully emerge from the dialectic in which they are involved. Embattled concepts, not engaged people, are presented to us. We are left with a novel of ideas that does not quite come off.

In spite of such strictures, there is much to be commended in the novel. The scenes which are good are impressive, the descriptions ring true, and the writing has a nervous energy that is suited to the subject and exciting in itself. I have not read Mr. Matthiessen's first novel, which received excellent reviews, but on the basis of this work I hope there is more to come.

REVIEWERS

Anthony Bailey, an English writer now in this country, has contributed to *Twentieth Century*, the *New Statesman and Nation*, and other publications. This is his first appearance in The Commonweal.

Philip J. Scharper is a member of the faculty of Fordham University.

James Greene is a freelance writer living in New York City.

William Pfaff is a former associate editor of The Commonweal.

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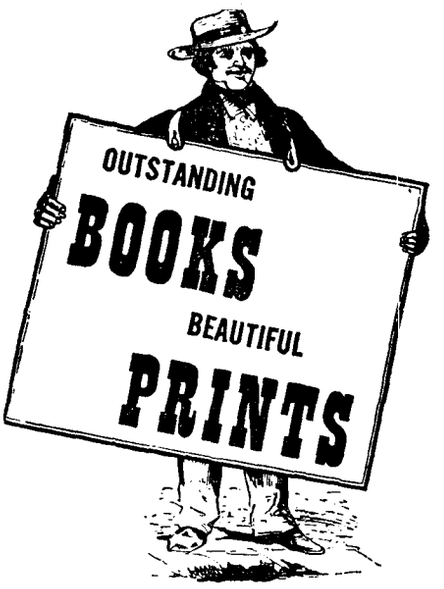

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